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ABSTRACT

These two papers summarize a portion of a wide-ranging survey, conducted in Memphis, of children's political attitudes and knowledge. Inconclusive data on prime influences in the process of political socialization and a lack of data on lower income, rural, Southern, black children suggested the scope of the research. The students sampled were in grades 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 in public and Roman Catholic schools and in integrated and segregated schools. As reported in the first paper, each child interviewed was asked his opinion about a fictitious child's political preferences and shown drawings appropriate to his own background to illustrate people who might influence his choices. The results show the strong influence of parents and indicate circumstances under which that influence is mitigated. The second paper discusses the interview questions: "What does the President do?" and "What is government?" They were asked in order to test an assumption of youthful disaffection with government. Data is categorized on the basis of benevolent, malevolent, or neutral perceptions and in terms of global or domestic functions of government. (JH)

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Children's Conceptions of the Structure and Functions of Government

Kenny, C., Lupfer, M. and Silver, J.

Now we are going to focus on the child's cognitive map of the Presidency and the Government. We asked our Ss the following 2 questions:

1. What does the President do?
2. What is the Government (or what does it do)?

Examples

What does the President do?

1. President Nixon signs checks that Gov. Wallace gives to him: Wallace - Head of Government.
2. If he wants us to go back to Africa, he could send us.
3. Sits there, talks a lot but doesn't do it.
4. Sits in White House, has meetings with Cabinet, gets interviewed, has fun.

What is the Government?

1. Helps you when your parents die.
2. Sen. Muskie - He tries to make the world better.

We asked these questions because of our theoretical interests in the child's cognition regarding his political world but also because during the last few years, a number of editorial writers and social commentators have voiced the opinion

that a large portion of America's youth have lost faith in their government's capacity to function wisely and fairly. American Government, these commentators fear, may be verging on a "crisis of confidence" which, if unchecked, will seriously erode our political and social institutions.

At the same time, researchers in the field of political socialization have been struck by the extraordinarily favorable attitudes expressed by children in thinking about political figures and government. By and large, children were found to view their government and its officials as benevolent, competent and powerful.

How is this discrepancy to be explained? Could it be that both the social commentators and the researchers of political socialization are correct and that American youth has become disenchanted with government and politicians, but that this disenchantment is a very recent phenomenon. Or might it be, as Jaros, Hirsch and Fleron (1968) and Hirsch (1971) have suggested, that the highly favorable views found by the social scientists might have resulted from oversampling white, urban, middle-class children and undersampling black, rural and impoverished children. Here in our study we have included race as a separate variable. In order to try to answer these questions we developed 2 coding systems for the question about the Presidency. The first one coded children's statements according to whether they perceived the President as a benevolent force, as a malevolent one or in a way that could not be clearly categorized as

definitely benevolent or definitely malevolent. The major finding was an overwhelming ratio of benevolent to malevolent perceptions. 98 Ss saw the President in benevolent terms whereas only 2 saw him in a malevolent light (e.g., could send us back to Africa), while the statements of 150 children were not clearly malevolent or benevolent. There were higher percentages of benevolent perceptions among blacks, younger Ss and Catholic school Ss.

Relying on a cognitive-developmental perspective, children's perceptions of the Presidency were also coded as depiciting global or specific functions of the Presidency and within each of these 2 categories as being either generally correct or incorrect. The results were not at all promising: expected age differences did not show up. The differences that did occur were either very small or impossible to interpret. It was clear, however, that specific functions were mentioned more than twice as often as global functions, and correct answers predominated over incorrect ones by nearly 4 to 1.

Now we turn to the question about the government, where the the majority of the interesting findings were obtained. The children's statements were coded according to the following governmental functions. Since the percentage of responses coded within each catelory is not on your handout I'll read the percentage as we move down the list:

1.	Welfare	36%
2.	Order	47%
3.	Foreign Policy/War	8%
4.	Administrative	16%
5.	Personification	19%
6.	Law Making	40%
7.	Judicial	2%
8.	Vague	7%
9.	DK	5%

Multiple coding was allowable for a single child - therefore, one child's statement could be coded in as many as three or four categories.

1. Welfare. Black girls were much more likely to mention welfare functions than black boys or whites of either sex. There are further differences when one looks at the type of school. In the all-white schools girls mentioned welfare functions more frequently than the boys. Also girls in the public schools mentioned welfare functions more than boys. Also whites in public school mentioned welfare functions less often than whites in Catholic schools.

If we can assume that whites in Catholic schools have less exposure to others who are on welfare than whites in public schools do, then it is clear that recognizing the welfare functions of government is not a direct function of mere exposure to others who are on welfare. On the other hand it does seem that the recipients of welfare -- at least the girls -- are more likely to perceive it as a government function.

2. Order. Major differences here are in terms of age differences. There was a marked increase with age in the frequency of recognizing the government's function of maintaining order. Only 1 in 4 recognized order in 3rd grade. The big break came between the 5th and 7th grades, with almost 2/3 of the 11th grade Ss recognizing order. The boys showed a sharper more clear-cut increase with age than girls did.

In the all-white schools only 17 out of 44 girls recognized order, whereas 30 of 48 boys in all-white schools recognized order as a function of government.

3. Foreign. Nothing.

4. Administrative. Can't interpret.

5. Personification. There was an impressive age trend for personification with 26 of the 54 statements that were coded as personification occuring in the 3rd grade and only 4 in the 11th grade.

6. Lawmaking. Recognition of lawmaking functions was higher among the whites, among older children, and in all-white schools. The age trend was quite significant but it developed earlier and was more clear-cut among boys and among whites.

Three more findings:

a. Blacks in Catholic schools made fewer lawmaking statements than blacks in public schools, whereas whites in private schools made the most lawmaking statements.

b. Whites gave more lawmaking statements in all white schools, whereas there were no differences among blacks due to race mix of school.

c. Private school kids developed more slowly at first but were ahead by the 11th grade.

7. Judicial. Nothing.

Discussion

One of the major findings - that can't be seen in the data as we presented them - is that virtually none of our subjects even mentioned concepts such as liberty, freedom, and individual rights. It was also surprising to see so few children mention the judicial and foreign policy functions. It would seem safe to conclude from these findings that someone - probably the parents and the school - is doing something wrong. The process of political socialization is incomplete if by grades 9 and 11, these important functions are not salient.

A final point is worth mentioning. We are all familiar with the current argument between law and order advocates and social justice proponents. Most often behavioral scientists seem to support the latter group. Yet the findings for the order function indicate a strong age trend. Recognizing this function of government then is part of the development of a mature perception of government. Perhaps then behavioral scientists downgrade the order function in their causal and not so causal discussions of government.

Children's Conceptions of the Structure and Functions of Government

Kenny, C., Lupfer, Dr. and Silver, J.

I. Question #1 What does the President do?
   A. First code
      1. Benevolent
      2. Malevolent
      3. Not clearly benevolent or malevolent
      4. Doesn't know
   B. Second code
      1. Global - correct (sits around White House and gives orders)
      2. Global - incorrect (rules the people; controls the world)
      3. Specific - correct (signs bills)
      4. Specific - incorrect (makes laws; makes sure those on welfare don't have no jobs)

II. Question #2 Code
   A. Welfare (collects garbage; social security)
   B. Order (enforces laws; protects people)
   C. Foreign/War (visits countries; decides on war)
   D. Administrative (collects taxes)
   E. Personification (He makes laws, the president)
   F. Lawmaking (make laws; pass bills)
   G. Judicial (have trials when someone is killed)
   H. Vague (the government is the people)

Presidency - Benevolence

	DK	Ben	Mal	Uncertain
Blacks	18	51	1	6
Whites	14	47	1	8
3	13	25	0	22
5	7	21	0	28
7	8	24	1	26
9	4	17	0	35
11	1	11	1	39
Public	24	52	2	99
Private	9	46	0	51

Presidency - Global vs. Specific

	No. Ans.	Global Correct	Global Incorrect	Specific Correct	Specific Incorrect
Girls	17	34	15	64	10
Boys	13	35	4	72	23

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	No	Yes
Girls	12	38
Boys	10	40
Bl girls	33	33
Wh girls	45	25
Bl boys	47	21
Wh boys	30	19
Public girls	32	37
Private girls	20	21
Public boys	7[illegible]	19
Private boys	34	21
Girls in black school	19	18
Girls in mixed school	43	26
Girls in white school	30	14
Boys in black school	27	12
Boys in mixed school	41	19
Boys in white school	39	9
Public blacks	13	35
Private blacks	27	19
Public whites	72	21
Private whites	57	23

Govt. - Order

	No	Yes
3	46	14
5	41	17
7	26	34
9	21	35
11	17	36
3rd girls	23	7
5th girls	22	6
7th girls	14	16
9th girls	12	14
11th girls	11	15
3rd boys	23	7
5th boys	19	11
7th boys	12	18
9th boys	9	21
11th boys	6	21
Girls in black schools	26	13
Girls in mixed schools	29	30
Girls in white schools	27	17
Boys in black schools	23	16
Boys in mixed schools	28	32
Boys in white schools	19	30

Govt. - Personification

	No	Yes
3	34	26
5	46	12
7	51	9
9	53	3
11	49	4

Govt. - Lawmaking

	No	Yes
3rd Public	30	6
3rd Private	24	0
5th Public	23	13
5th Private	13	9
7th Public	18	18
7th Private	11	13
9th Public	20	18
9th Public	9	9
11th Public	17	18
11th Private	6	12

This paper and the accompanying one, were presented at the meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, New Orleans, April, 1973.

Social Influence on Children's Presidential Preferences

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Students of political behavior, attempting to explain the diversity of political attitudes and voting patterns in adults, have increasingly focused on the political views of children and the process by which their ideas are learned. The emerging interest in political socialization is, of course, predicated on the belief that "in things political, as in other things, the child is father to the man" (Adler and Harrington, 1970, p. 1), that early political learning has important consequences for later political behavior. The questions that the study of political socialization seeks to answer are these, according to Greenstein (1968): (a) who, (b) learns what, (c) from whom, (d) under what circumstances, (e) with what effects?

The first two papers to be presented today summarize portions of a wide-ranging survey of children's political attitudes and knowledge, conducted in the spring of 1972 in Memphis. Last year was, after all, a Presidential election year and Tennessee, along with many other states, had a Presidential primary during the time when the survey was being conducted.

Choosing one Presidential candidate over another is a political decision which even young children understand, and one in which many enage. Indeed, preferring one contender to another is probably one of the first political choices any child makes. When a child comes to prefer a candidate, who influences his choice? His parents? His friends? His teacher(s)? Today's first report focuses on the relative impact of these various socialization agents as the child decides "who to be for" for President.

Both common sense and a great deal of empirical data point to the preeminence of the parents as the primary political socializers. Most children report the same party preferences as their parents (Maccoby, Matthews and Morton, 1954; Jennings and Niemi, 1968) and cite their parents as the best source of voting advice (Greenstein, 1965). As for whether mother or father is more influential, "part

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of the common lore of American political behavior is that the male is more dominant in political matters than the female in his role both of husband and of father" (Jennings and Niemi, 1968, p. 180). In support of this contention, Greenstein's (1965) New Haven sample and Hirsch's (1971) Appalachian sample generally preferred the father as a source of voting advice. On the other hand, Jennings and Niemi (1968) and Maccoby, Matthews and Morton (1954) found no difference between maternal and paternal influence, while Langton (1969) and Hirsch (1971) obtained evidence for "maternal dominance" in the matter of party identification.

Recently, Hess and Torney (1967) have challenged the pre-eminence of the parents' role. Having questionned a national sample of 12,000 white elementary school children, they asserted that the public school is the most important and effective instrument of political socialization in the United States. Clearly there is a need for more evidence before any conclusions can be drawn.

We decided to jump into the fray, not only because of the inconclusive findings, but also because most surveys have sampled the views of white, middle-class children in the urban centers of the North and Midwest and largely ignored the views of black, Southern, rural and lower-income children. Since many children fitting these latter categories live in Memphis, we sought to sample their views. In addition, we wondered whether the earlier data might have been distorted by asking such direct questions as this: "If you had to vote, who would be best to ask for voting advice -- your mother or your father?" Many children, we suspect, are hesitant to choose between their mothers and fathers, since the choice of one implies the rejection of the other, and would tend to answer, "I'd make up my own mind." We felt that a projective method of obtaining the information would be preferable. Thus children in our survey were asked to guess who would influence a fictitious child.

Method

Selecting the Sample

Students enrolled in grades 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 in the Memphis public and Roman Catholic schools in the spring of 1972 constituted

the population from which the sample was drawn. For purposes of selecting the sample, the population was stratified along five dimensions, as shown in Table 1: on the basis of the students' grade level, race and sex; according to whether the students attended a public or Catholic school; and whether the students attended a racially segregated or integrated school. (A racially segregated school was defined as one in which 90% or more of the students belonged to the same racial group; an integrated school was defined as one attended by both blacks and whites and one in which no racial group comprised as much as 90% of the student body.)

Respondents were selected randomly within each stratum. However, the number of respondents drawn from any stratum did not necessarily correspond to the proportion of the population represented in that stratum. For example, only 6% of all children in the population attended Catholic schools. In the sample though, Catholic school children comprised 37% of the total. The reason for "oversampling" certain strata was to enhance the reliability of measures taken on strata containing small numbers of children.

Procedure

Nine persons conducted the public school interviews, and three of these individuals conducted the Catholic school interviews. All interviewers were white; five were male and four were female; five were undergraduate students at Memphis State University majoring in political science or psychology; two were psychology graduate students; and two were Memphis State faculty members.

Interviews were conducted during regular school hours. Typically, the respondent was excused from class or study hall and escorted by the interviewer to an empty classroom or lounge. Each interview averaged 30 minutes and was tape recorded.

To assess the relative impact of different socialization agents on the child's presidential preference, the following projective device appeared midway in the interview. A situation was described in which a boy named John (or a girl named Mary, if the respondent was female) was deciding "who to be for" for President. In each question, the respondent was asked to guess which of two or more people would more likely influence John's (or Mary's) choice. To engage the respondent's interest, cartoon drawings of the various characters were provided. White cartoon characters were shown to

white children, and black characters to black children.

If you will turn to the cartoons and imagine that you are a black male youngster, then the interview went something like this:

> This is John. This is an election year and John is trying to decide who to be for for President. (Show pictures of mother and father.) These are John's parents. They are for one candidate. (Show picture of John's friends.) These are some of John's friends. They are for sombody else. They are for another candidate. Do you think John would agree with his parents or with his friends?
>
> (Return to pictures of mother and father.) Now suppose that John found out that his mother was actually for one candidate and that his father was for somebody else. Whose side do you think John would be on -- his mother's or his father's?
>
> (Show pictures of TV and newspaper.) John is watching news on TV. A man on TV says that Mr. So-and-so is the best man for President. But John remembers that the newspaper had said that somebody else would make the best President. Do you think John would agree with the man on TV or with the newspaper?
>
> (Now add pictures of teacher and clergyman) This is John's classroom. This is his teacher. John studies about government and elections. His teacher has told him who she's for. Now this is John's ___ (pastor, priest, rabbi). He has also said who he's for. Now John is trying to make up his mind. Who do you think he'll listen to most .... his mother? His father? His friends? The man on TV? People writing in the newspaper? His teacher? Or his pastor?

Results

When asked to select from among seven potential agents, the typical child selected his parents, especially his mother, as most likely to influence his choice for President. As shown in Table 2, 51% of the total sample named either both parents (23%), mother (19%), or father (10%) when asked to choose among mother, father, television, newspaper, teacher, friends or clergyman. Following the parents, in descending order of influence, were clergyman(14%), friends (10%), television (7%), teachers (4%) and newspapers (1%). Detailed analysis of responses suggested that as children grow older, the preeminence of parents', particularly the mother's influence diminishes somewhat. Whereas 68% of all third-graders selected one or both parents as most influential, only 42%, 39% and 45% of seventh-, ninth- and eleventh-graders selected one or both parents. Two other age-related trends were noted: Clergymen were found to have diminishing influence as the child grows older, while friends appeared to have increasing influence, at least up to the ninth grade.

Several significant racial differences were found. As shown in Table 3, clergymen and [illegible] were cited as major influences by blacks than by whites. On the other hand, white selected their friends and television more often than blacks did.

Two additional questions also examined the influence of parents. When asked to choose between mother and father only, 46% of the total sample chose mother, 28% chose father and 25% were unable or unwilling to make a choise. This pattern varied considerably, however, depending upon the sex and race of the respondent. The tendency to yield to mother's influence was more striking among blacks (54%) and among females (50%) than among whites (39%) or males (43%). Indeed 58% of the black females in the sample chose mother, with only 14% choosing father. Only among white males was father selected more often than mother, by a margin of 41% to 36%. (We suspected that these results might have been associated with the presence or absence of father from the home. Examination of the data failed to support this suspicion.)

When the choice was narrowed to parents and friends, 61% of the sample reported that the parents would be more influential, 25% chose friends and 14% expressed no choice. The responses also corroborated the finding reported earlier that parents' influence diminishes with the child's increasing age, at least up to the ninth grade, as trend that can be clearly seen in Figure 1.

When asked to choose between television and newspapers, 57% of the total sample named television as more influential, 23% chose newspapers and 20% expressed no opinion. However, the preference for television was more pronounced among Catholic schoolers, among whom 65% chose television and only 14% the newspaper, than among public schoolers who preferred TV to newspapers by a margin of 52% to 28%. Moreover, the preference for newspapers was greatest among those least likely to read them -- among third- and fifth-graders!

Discussion and Summary

What do these results suggest?

Like most young people questionned in other surveys, the Memphis sample identified one or both parents as the most important influence on Presidential preference. And, also similar to earlier findings, the influence of the parents was found to be stronger

among elementary than secondary school youths.

As for the relative impact of maternal and paternal influence, our data suggest that more young people are likely to agree with their mother's than father's Presidential choice, when the parents disagree. Maternal influence was most pronounced among black females; only white males were more likely to agree with father than mother. Furthermore, this pattern seemed to be unaffected by the presence or absence of the father from the home. Perhaps Langton (1969, pp. 82-83) is correct when he argues that the assumption of paternal dominance in political matters is a residue from the days when females were not allowed to vote and when very few attended college. "Once the forces of female political participation and rising education were set in motion, they were abetted by certain structural properties of the family in increasing the relative importance of the mother. That is, early affective ties and emotional dependences between child and mother could now be expected to have some carryover into political matters, especially for children who happened to have parents with dissimilar preferences."

Not surprisingly, we found the influence of peers to increase as the child grows older, at least up to the ninth grade. The curious reversal found in the eleventh grade-- when peer influence receded and parental influence reasserted itself -- was unexpected. It is possible, of course, that peers exert more political influence at ages 14 and 15 than at other ages but we are skeptical of that interpretation. We suspect the reversal was more a function of sampling peculiarities than anything else.

Finally, a word about the feeble showing of teachers in this survey. As noted in Table 2, only 4% of the total sample expressed the view that their teacher was the major influence on their Presidential choice. For two reasons, we hesitate to conclude that teachers have little impact on the child's political socialization: (a) Many teachers refrain from voicing their own Presidential preferences to their students, precluding the possibility of influencing the child directly. (b) In other parts of our survey, when the child's knowledge about government was being tapped, they often reported that their information came from teachers. As would be expected then, teachers were more effective in transmitting political information than in offering political advice.

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TABLE 1

Number of Children Interviewed in Each Stratum of Population

Grade	Race	Sex	Public schools			Catholic schools			Sum
			Predominantly black	Integrated	Predominantly white	Predominantly black	Integrated	Predominantly white	
11	Black	Female	6 (2)	3 (0)		—	3 (0)		12 (2)
		Male	5 (1)	2 (0)		—	3 (1)		10 (2)
	White	Female		3 (0)	6 (5)		2 (1)	3 (2)	14 (8)
		Male		2 (1)	7 (5)		4 (4)	3 (1)	17 (11)
9	Black	Female	6 (0)	3 (1)		—	3 (0)		12 (1)
		Male	7 (0)	3 (1)		—	3 (1)		13 (2)
	White	Female		3 (0)	5 (1)		3 (1)	3 (1)	14 (3)
		Male		3 (3)	8 (3)		3 (3)	3 (1)	17 (10)
7	Black	Female	6 (1)	3 (2)		3 (2)	3 (2)		15 (7)
		Male	6 (0)	3 (1)		3 (1)	3 (1)		15 (3)
	White	Female		3 (1)	6 (1)		3 (3)	3 (2)	15 (7)
		Male		3 (1)	6 (1)		3 (2)	3 (3)	15 (7)
5	Black	Female	6 (0)	3 (0)		3 (1)	3 (1)		12 (2)
		Male	6 (0)	3 (1)		3 (2)	3 (2)		15 (5)
	White	Female		4 (1)	6 (6)		3 (2)	3 (2)	16 (11)
		Male		3 (0)	6 (5)		3 (1)	3 (3)	15 (9)
3	Black	Female	6 (0)	3 (0)		3 (3)	3 (2)		15 (5)
		Male	6 (0)	3 (0)		3 (2)	3 (3)		15 (5)
	White	Female		3 (0)	6 (4)		3 (2)	3 (3)	15 (9)
		Male		3 (1)	6 (5)		3 (2)	3 (3)	15 (11)
		Sums	60 (4)	59 (14)	62 (36)	28 (11)	69 (34)	30 (21)	308 (120)

Note.- The number in parentheses refers to the number of children in that stratum who were judged to have high socioeconomic status. The occupation of all children's parents were classified according to Warner's Occupational Rating Scale. If either parent's occupation was rated 1, 2 or 3, then the child was assumed to have high status; if neither parent's occupational rating reached the 1, 2 or 3 levels, then the child was assumed to have low status. Recall that socioeconomic status was not one of the five dimensions used to stratify the population.

TABLE 2

Responses to question, "Who is John's (Mary's) choice for President most likely to agree with?", according to grade level

Agent of influence	Overall	Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 7	Grade 9	Grade 11	Chi square
One or both parents	51% (147)	68% (40)	64% (26)	42% (25)	39% (22)	45% (24)	15.35, $p < .05$
Mother	19 (54)	37 (22)	22 (13)	13 (8)	9 (5)	11 (6)	20.37, $p < .001$
Father	10 (28)	10 (6)	16 (9)	5 (3)	9 (5)	9 (5)	3.1
Both parents	23 (65)	20 (12)	24 (14)	23 (14)	21 (12)	24 (13)	<1
Clergyman	14 (40)	19 (11)	19 (11)	20 (12)	4 (2)	8 (4)	10.94, $p < .05$
Friends	10 (29)	3 (2)	3 (1)	12 (7)	25 (14)	11 (6)	22.93, $p < .001$
Television	7 (20)	5 (3)	3 (2)	8 (5)	9 (5)	9 (5)	2.42
Teacher	4 (12)	5 (3)	0 (0)	3 (1)	4 (2)	11 (6)	6.79
Newspaper	1 (4)	0 (0)	3 (2)	3 (1)	3 (1)	0 (0)	<1
Don't know	12 (34)	3 (1)	10 (6)	15 (9)	18 (10)	15 (8)	8.96
Total	(286)	(59)	(58)	(60)	(56)	(53)	

Note -The number on the left in each cell indicates the per cent of respondents selecting the agent of influence. The number to the right in parentheses indicates the frequency of respondents making the choice.

TABLE 3

Responses to Question, "Who is John's (Mary's) choice for President most likely to agree with?", according to race

Agent of influence	Black	White	z between proportions
One or both parents	55% (74)	48% (73)	1.23
Mother	25 (33)	14 (21)	2.33, $p < .05$
Father	9 (12)	11 (16)	< 1
Both parents	22 (29)	24 (36)	< 1
Clergyman	20 (27)	9 (13)	2.82, $p < .01$
Friends	6 (8)	14 (21)	2.39, $p < .05$
Television	4 (5)	10 (15)	2.03, $p < .05$
Teacher	4 (5)	5 (7)	< 1
Newspaper	2 (3)	1 (1)	< 1
Don't know	9 (12)	14 (22)	1.44
Sums	(134)	(152)	

Note.- The number on the left in each cell indicates the per cent of respondents selecting the agent of influence. The number to the right in parentheses indicates the frequency of respondents making the choice.